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Bill targets trade status of terrorists

By Rita McWilliams
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Texas Democrat Lloyd Bentsen, saying Congress must discourage state-sponsored terrorism, introduced yesterday a Senate bill to deny Iran, Syria and Libya special trade privileges reserved for nations friendly to the United States.

The bill, which has 21 co-sponsors including Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman David Durenberger, a Minnesota Republican, would effectively double most of the tariffs those three nations pay on exports to the United States by revoking their Most Favored Nation status, according to Mr. Bentsen.

The State Department had no position on the legislation yesterday, but sources there said the bill would not aid the United States in trying to secure help from Syria in liberating six Americans kidnapped in Lebanon.

Mr. Bentsen said the capture of the four men who have been charged with hijacking the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro will not end terrorism directed against U.S. citizens.

The measure is needed, he said, to "give additional credibility to the action we took last Thursday night in bringing the four PLO hijackers to custody. . . . This legislation tells nations that support terrorism: You cannot do so with impunity. You cannot do so and continue to enjoy the trade benefits we give our friends."

Syria, Libya and Iran exported nearly \$280 million in goods to the United States during the first seven months of this year, Mr. Bentsen said. The bill would triple duties on Syrian tobacco, double duties on Iranian crude oil and on Libyan oil and petroleum, according to Mr. Bentsen's office.